

By C. I. RUTHERFORD *

As predicted at the end of the article on the Butterflies of Crete in 1979 by Cooper and Rutherford, the attractions of this delightful island proved irresistible and I returned in 1982 and again in 1983 but before detailing the results of these visits I must refer back to the earlier article. (*Ent. Rec.* 92: 239-242).

This was written before the fourth edition of Higgins and Riley had appeared and this makes a number of changes both to the nomenclature and to the recorded distribution of some species. I have also had some most helpful correspondence with Mr. Russell Bretherton clarifying some of the anomalies and reducing the number of species *known* to occur in Crete to 39 with two more "possibles"; this of course means that Michael Cooper and I had done better than we thought (percentage wise) in 1979.

Mr. Bretherton was also kind enough to point out that I had misunderstood Johnson's record of *Turanana vicrama* Moore; as the only *Turanana* species shown in Higgins and Riley's first edition was *T. panagea* Rebel I had assumed this to be a synonym but I now understand that what was known as *T. vicrama* is now regarded as a subspecies of *P. baton* and is known as *Pseudophilotedes baton schiffermuelleri* Hemming which is obviously the insect I had simply recorded as *P. baton*.

This eliminates *T. panagea* from the list of 44 species; Mr. Bretherton also suggests that neither *Aglais urticae* nor *Agrodiatus* (formerly *Plebicula*) *thersites* should be included and these two species are indeed not shown for Crete in Higgins and Riley's fourth edition. Mr. Bretherton also regarded the records for *Pyrgus armoricanus* and *Gegenes nostrodamus* as needing confirmation before inclusion in the island list (but see later).

In 1982 we arrived in Crete on 19th May and left on 2nd June so that we were just two weeks later than on our first visit, on this occasion, and again in 1983, we were based at Hersonnissou some 20 kms further East than on the first stay. Not surprisingly the species seen and caught were very similar to those of 1979 but we did explore some new ground.

First, though, we revisited the Lasithi plateau where *Zerynthia* (*Allancastria*) *cerisyi cretica* Rebel was quite plentiful on 22nd May and *Iphiclides podalirius* L. was seen on the approach road near the rim, at this point one or two small whites were pursued without success as it seemed a likely site for *Pieris ergane* Geyer; at lower levels *P. rapae* L. was so common that it was impossible to look for something so similar.

On the 24th we drove up to Anogia and then on up towards

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Mt. Ida; the road has obviously been improved since Bretherton's visit as we drove about seven kilometers without difficulty (though with some care!) and this brought us on to the higher plateau, we could have gone further but it was obviously too early for *Kretania psylorita* Freyer and there was hardly anything to be seen on the wing. On the way down from Anogia we stopped at one or two promising spots by the roadside and took among other things *Polygonia egea* Cramer, *Vanessa cardui* L. and *A. cerisyi cretica*; *G. cleopatra* was seen but escaped among bushes on the steep hillside.

We made an early start on the 27th in order to visit the Omalos plateau which we reached by mid-morning and quite near the head of the famous Samaria Gorge I took a solitary *Aricia agestis* D. & S. flying on the hillside, *P. icarus* males were on the wing and I was quite surprised to find that I had at last taken *A. agestis* but I did not find any more. As we reached the plateau on the way up we noticed a parked car and some 200 meters from the road two people beating a large bush into an inverted umbrella! We resolved to make contact on the way back but although the car was still there there was no sign of the entomologists and a few minutes later the sun was obscured by heavy cloud and torrential rain began to fall; no doubt the umbrella was now being used for the purpose for which it was originally designed but we decided to start the long descent while we could still see the road which in parts was more like a river.

The results of the 1982 visit can be summarised by comparing it with 1979:

(a) One species, *A. agestis*, not seen by M. W. C. or myself in 1979 was taken and on a site not visited in 1979.

(b) I took three species that I had almost certainly seen but not taken in May 1979, namely *P. machaon*, *V. cardui* and *P. egea*. (I am assuming that the Vanessid that I saw in Kritsa in 1979 must have been this species now that I know the *A. urticae* does not occur on the Island.) M. W. C. took all these three in July/August 1979.

(c) I did not see two species captured in 1979, *Pontia daplidice* L. and *Lampides boeticus* L. nor did I see the two others seen but not taken in 1979, *Pieris brassicae* L. and *Lycaena phlaeas* L.

(d) All the other species recorded in May 1979 were seen again, many of them in considerably greater numbers, particularly *G. cleopatra* although I again failed to capture a specimen. As in 1979 only a single male *Hipparchia cretica* Rebel was taken and no others seen, this was recorded as *H. semele* L. but has since been accorded specific rank.

In 1983 we stayed at the same hotel as in 1982 but this time we went in October, a period not covered by any of the recorded visits; presumably it is a period that has been avoided on the assumption that the hot dry summer would not have been conducive to

much insect activity in the early autumn. This has certainly been my own assumption until I visited the Algarve in October 1981 (*Ent. Rec.* 94: 76) and was surprised to see quite a lot of butterflies including some of the species known to occur in Crete but not seen by any of us on recent visits.

We were not disappointed, the countryside was certainly very dried up but the hotel gardens were well watered and many butterflies were seen therein, including *Gonepteryx cleopatra* L. feeding on geranium flowers and much more approachable than it had been in the spring. In the first five days about ten species were recorded in and around the hotel grounds including both *Papilio machaon* L. and *Iphiclides podalirius* L.

On 3rd October we hired a small car for four days and explored a nice range of localities but without making any very long journeys, we did not really get into western Crete on this occasion. On the way up to Lasithi we stopped near Kera to admire the view and a large dark butterfly alighted nearby and proved to be a worn female *Pandoriana pandora* D. & S. Many "whites" were inspected on the Lasithi plateau but all appeared to be *Pieris rapae* L. On the next day we reached the South Coast at Ierapetra and returned through the hills via Kastelli seeing an occasional Grayling but not catching one until we visited the gorge leading towards Anogia a couple of days later when a single *Polygonia egea* Cramer and several *Hipparchia cretica* Rebel females were taken, it was significant that all *Maniola jurtina* L. seen were females too.

On the 5th I went along to Neapolis to try to find the area where D. Hockin had taken *Gegenes pumilio* Hoffman. in 1973. After several unpromising stops I found an area along the Old Road quite near Neapolis where quite a lot were flying amongst the olives and where there was a well watered vegetable patch, a dried up river course and a patch of heathy hillside. The first significant catch was a small "blue" which turned out to be a fresh female *Syntarucus pirithous* L., the only one positively identified throughout, most such small "blues" turned out to be the small local race of *Polyommatus icarus* Rott. even when flying around bushes. While searching for another *S. pirithous* I netted a skipper and boxed it without really looking at it assuming it to be *Carcharodus alceae* Esp. which was generally common in its small autumnal form; however on later inspection this proved to be *Pyrgus armoricanus* Ober. in fair condition. Naturally enough we were back on the same site next day but among large numbers of *P. icarus* and *C. alceae* the only thing of interest was a single example of *Aricia agestis* D. & S.; *Celastrina argiolus* L. and *Vanessa atalanta* L. were also taken here.

Without the car the last few days were spent in the environs of the hotel and of the village of Hersonnissou where a rather promising piece of rough ground was visited two or three times

and provided the first *Lycaena phlaeas* L. that I had seen since the early days of my first visit but the best catch here was a fine example of *Gegenes pumilio* Hoffman. on the 8th, two more were taken and a fourth missed in the next two days in this area which also yielded *Cynthia cardui* L., *Colias crocea* Geoff., *Pontia daplidice* L., *Lasiommata megera* L. and *Pararge aegeria* L. as well as a single *Hipparchia cretica* and several of the other species already mentioned.

I had thus recorded 22 species, exactly the same number as in my May 1979 visit though of course seven of them were not included in the first list. This time however I had the satisfaction of taking *S. pirithous* which was not recorded by any of the previously reported expeditions, but for which the Algarve had whetted my appetite. Probably of even more significance were the "skippers": *Pyrgus armoricanus* definitely confirmed (the genitalia have been examined by Dr. M. Hull) and so bringing the number of species known from the island back to 40; and *Gegenes pumilio* found to be not uncommon, this together with D. Hockin's record suggests the possibility that the earlier record of *Gegenes nostradamus* Fab. may have been due to misidentification of *G. pumilio* which in Crete seems quite large and Mr. Bretherton tells me that these species are easily confused.

Before concluding I must refer back to my failure to visit Western Crete in order to pass on briefly the observations of Derek and Jeremy Steeden of the Lancashire and Cheshire Entomological Society who spent two weeks at Maleme in Western Crete from 21st April to 4th May 1982. During this time they covered a lot of ground, obviously working much harder than I did, they found many attractive habitats but were still only able to record thirteen species, some of them only in ones and twos; the best were *Zerinthia cerisyi cretica* Rebel and *Pseudophilotedes baton schiffmuelleri* Hemming, while only one was not among the species I saw in May 1982 and that was *Vanessa atalanta* L. It seems that late April is rather too early to get a representative sample of the butterflies of this island, Johnson's experience in 1964 (*Ent. Rec.* 76: 187) would seem to bear this out.

It is interesting to note in conclusion, and as a guide to others planning a visit to Crete, that the only species among the 40 listed for the island which have not been recorded by any of the recently reported British visits are *Issoria lathonia* L. and *Zizeeria knysna* Trimen; the former always seems to be elusive, it is listed for the Canary Islands but in six visits I have never seen it there. *Z. knysna* on the other hand is easily found in the Canaries and I am familiar with its habits there and have visited apparently suitable habitats for it in Crete without seeing any sign of it.